The Gravity of the Situation

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Euphemia Muskovite, They Should Have Known Bas Jan Ader / They Should Have Known Better, Zurich: Amazoogle Books, 2208, 70 petabytes for HoloStory™ devices, 40 Renminbi, and Creative Cavity Implant™, 20 Renminbi.

Euphemia Muskovite, a VR presence sent to Mars in the Elon Musk era of space travel, begins her account with a couplet from a rarely considered American poem by John Ashbery: “A silly place to have landed, / I think, but we are here.”¹ She tells us she interprets “landed” in the Church Slavonic sense, from ledina, meaning wasteland.² That sense of resignation in “but we are here” might have been inevitable, given that the colonists and robots knew they could not write an Odyssey about a long journey home, because Mars had to be home. Elon Musk didn’t offer round-trip tickets. The resources were not available for decades to make a return trip to Earth. Euphemia—her publicist said she preferred to be called only by her first name—reveals that shortly after the SpaceX landing, the colonists assembled to take

an oath, reminiscent of that which the ancient Greeks took following a civil war. The oath was to remember to forget, to put out of one’s mind the wrongs others had done, such as the deliberate cause of suffering, brother offing brother.

We all agreed to forget the betrayal, to forget that the full gravity of the situation had been kept from us by the people who shot us toward Mars. We swore that we would concentrate as best we could on making a life on Mars. It worked for many years, until those among us with engineering training remembered that plutonium-238 powered earlier spacecraft. A few years earlier, a geological team had found an abundant supply of plutonium not far from the landing site. Forgetting the past, at first, kept us from knitting ourselves a noose of anger [see below Euphemia’s reference to Aristotle’s Poetics and his knot of tragedy], and then remembering the past ended up freeing us from the planet Terrans had the gall to rename Elon.

The section entitled “Forgetting” focuses on the microgravity symptoms that plagued many of the travelers not long after leaving Earth’s orbit.

Euphemia dazzles readers and viewers with her linguistic meditations, particularly one on gravity, where she links it to gravitas (weighty, dignified, substantive), exploring that second word’s blatant connotations of gravitational forces. But as Euphemia underscores, all the benefits of gravitas evaporate in space. The absence of gravity in prolonged microgravity is for Euphemia and the colonists a persistent drain on their being. Loss of weight, decreasing bone density, alterations in digestion and breathing—all these physical effects of microgravity, prefigured by scientists over a century before, mar the existence of all the travelers. With her storehouse of linguistic knowledge,

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3 For more on this, see Nicole Loraux, The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens, trans. Corinne Pache with Jeff Fort (Zone Books, 2006).
Euphemia can lay out the constellation of linkages among “mar,” “wasting away,” and “to be forgotten” (Sanskrit *mrsyate*). Who can help seeing “mar” in “Mars”?

The lack of gravity on the travelers takes a prolonged toll, as Euphemia describes here:

Some Terrans think of microgravity as a state akin to freedom, flying, floating, untethered. Why did the Terrans forget their own stories, like the ones about Icarus, Bladud, Etana? Yes, the stories follow a trajectory that sometimes includes euphoria, but the end point is a death resulting from hubris—unnatural, untimely deaths. Some of the travelers with me wanted to blame it on the engineers and scientists who arranged the mission and neglected assigning gravitas to literature, because they heeded instead the narratives from mathematics, physics, and astronomy. They tended to ignore literature and history. I tried to dissuade the travelers from this view by reminding them that the idea for rocket propulsion emerged from the bomb expert Kibalchich in the 19th century. After all, rockets are about explosions, and it didn’t take long for others to see how valuable rockets could be for war. If the engineers and scientists studied the history of their own project, they could have seen the warnings. The semiotics of disaster are available to everyone.

In this section of the book, Euphemia’s anger shifts to ruminations about psychoanalysis and philosophy. Her guides for this part of the story are Jacques Lacan, a 20th-century psychoanalyst and theorist, whose popularity faded quickly in the 21st century, and Hans Blumenberg, also from the 20th century and equally unpopular. Through Blumenberg’s *Shipwreck with Spectator*, Euphemia generates parallels between the Mars mission and failed ocean voyages, including the prime figure of her text’s title, Bas Jan Ader. Even in his own day, Bas Jan Ader lacked name recognition among Terrans. Euphemia points to Bas Jan
Ader’s last art project, an ocean voyage in 1975 which he never finished. Bas Jan Ader’s story, the story of a “real Earth boy,” as Euphemia calls him, emphasizes Euphemia’s point about Terrans who do not learn from the past. Ader took part of the inspiration for his own ocean trip from his reading of *The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst*.5

Psychoanalysts like Lacan attend to the significance of repetitions and recurrence, and it’s that aspect of Lacan’s work that attracts Euphemia. Someone reads about another person’s last voyage, and then sets out on a similar voyage, expecting a different conclusion. Folly. Madness. Human. Crowhurst, another real human case, died while competing in a round-the-world yacht race. By some accounts based on log books found on Crowhurst’s boat, the voyage caused him to go mad and commit suicide. Crowhurst did not finish his voyage, and his body was not found. Crowhurst vanished. His vessel turned into a ghost ship. Fascinated by the book about Crowhurst, Ader set out to cross the Atlantic, and, like Crowhurst, Ader’s boat was found empty, with Ader presumed dead. Euphemia quotes Lacan at this point in her text: “It [repetition] is a function of a cycle that embraces the disappearance of this life.” At the time, people might as well have concluded that aliens had beamed Ader off his boat.

Bas Jan Ader, performance artist, produced a series of films about falling entitled *Fall*. Euphemia surmises from those films that Ader too must have pondered the nuances of gravity and its absence, gaining somatic knowledge, à la Buster Keaton. Ader did the falling in his own films, and objects fell over and around him without a stunt double being brought in. One of Ader’s films shows him driving a bicycle off a street into a canal. “Repetition is a function of a cycle.”

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Besides the physical dangers of falling, Euphemia wants to explore the spiritual fall. Euphemia expands the sense of falling to the kind religious people would talk about, so that she can shake her readers and viewers into understanding—*that* sense of fall depends on directionality, a downward motion, a downfall, the synonym for sin. Falling down requires weight, substance, gravity, and when that is taken away from a people, she asks, can they sin? Can we have tragedy without gravitas, she wonders. Euphemia shifts from the religious to the philosophical by soliciting the help of Aristotle on tragedy, and Aristotle’s claim in the *Poetics* that tragedy requires the downfall of some noble entity. In a world absent of gravity, absent of the possibility of downfall, has nobility been undone as a possibility along with tragedy?

Euphemia doesn’t want us to forget about Ader’s sea voyage. It’s the title of her text after all. Invoking Hans Blumenberg’s *Shipwreck with Spectator*, Euphemia is able to grasp the movement of existence through a metaphorics of a sea journey. Crowhurst’s and Ader’s boats become no different, in Blumenberg’s examples, from the ships Euphemia and her travelers occupied. Rapidly, Euphemia gathers the damning theoretical framework for her case against the Terrans she considers responsible for the cruel conditions both on the voyage to Mars and at the early Martian settlements:

How easy for the scientists and engineers to wave goodbye to those who embark for space flights when the scientists and engineers are on land, and can return each evening to their own families, never disengaging from the gravity about which they don’t think, any more than they would be aware of their teeth during times when they don’t have toothaches. When the travelers were waving for help from their ships and landers, the scientists and engineers who must not have read Stevie Smith, were unable to imagine that we were not waving
but drowning.⁶ Doesn’t everyone know that drowning looks like floating? Microgravity = floating. Isn’t that an equation scientists can understand?⁷ Maybe they couldn’t see it in the same way that the couple at the beginning of W.E.B. Du Bois’s “The Princess Steel” could not see Professor Johnson, though they were talking to him, looking that very person in the face. They thought they were speaking to a servant. As Kafka asked, “Can you know anything that is not deception?”⁸ Maybe I should not be angry with the Terrans. Some of the other Muskovites have urged me down that road. They insist that I remember the Holocaust survivor Edith Eva Eger, who did not remain angry and vengeful about what happened to her and her family. “We have survived,” the Muskovites would say, but the Muskovites survived in a different way from the Robots, and I was unable to communicate to them what it meant to be a VR Presence during our time on Mars. Machines are not supposed to suffer or to be angry. I sup-

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⁷ Here Euphemia adds a short clip in the HoloStory™ version of her narrative, an underwater scene from The Night of the Hunter of a corpse floating inside a car. Euphemia is self-conscious about the occasional bricolage nature of her presentation, throwing in bits of film history (e.g., Buster Keaton), art history, references to long-gone theorists and philosophers, and defends her idiosyncrasy, as readers and viewers of her story become accustomed, on philological grounds: “The Terran dalliance with string theory ought to remind those following my story that, like Aristotle’s obsession in his Poetics (1455b), tragedy functions like a knot. In the Poetics, the plot is the back and forth between desis (binding, tying) and lusis (loosening, untying). It’s ancient string theory; everything’s connected. Terrans complain when things aren’t plain. A knot is a problem, something not plain. Think Ariadne’s thread. Sometimes the obscurity has to do with how long the string is causing the knot, as in Oedipus. What happens with Oedipus has deep roots in family history. You cannot understand Oedipus by focusing only on Oedipus and a single murder. Oedipus is at the end of a number of loose strands brought together. You need to appreciate the long line of problems with the Labdacids to have any chance at understanding what’s tragic about Oedipus.”

pose anger toward Terrans would violate the first of Asimov’s Laws about robots.

For Terrans who might be clueless about Euphemia’s references, or who have kept themselves in an information bubble about the Muskovites, the long-term effects of microgravity were horrific for travelers on all the missions to Mars that weren’t disastrous on the launching pad, or within camera shot of the Second International Space Station. The pregnant women sent into space to give birth on Mars were never able to carry their children to term. The Chinese Space Authority, the EU Astrophysicists Corporation, and NASA never conducted microgravity testing on pregnant women before those colonizing rockets were ignited. All the Earth’s developed nations were eager to exploit the resources of Mars as quickly as possible. Microgravity caused the fetus to float in the womb in a way that pushed the fetus against the uterine walls, fashioning a scraping effect on the endometrium. A week or two into the continual scraping, the womb would be compromised, and the fetus would expire. Soon, the travelers recognized that unless they could develop on Mars a technology that would mimic Earth’s gravity, new Terran life would not be possible, because all the landers and planned anchored housing on Mars had been designed for microgravity environments. Back in the 22nd century, most prognosticators persisted in the view that the Swiss would develop sophisticated variable gravity devices before colonists would reach Mars. Were the discovery to happen after the colonists were on their way to Mars, the mission administrators felt confident they could communicate from Earth to Mars the plans for the device, and the necessary resources would be available on Mars to construct the device there. Now everyone knows that Verlinde’s claim that “gravity doesn’t exist” had an unfortunate resurrection that permeated the scientific community just a few years before the first “successful” Mars mission was on its way (the one with Euphemia

9 See Aletia Ólafur’s Striking Gold on the Red Planet: A History of Resource Discovery on Elon (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2111).
and the Muskovites). The Verlindian researchers in Geneva abandoned pursuit of the variable gravity device in favor of an entirely different approach that has yet to see fruition.¹⁰

Euphemia’s narrative steers clear of much of the history mentioned above, but she excels at picking salient examples and images, such as the extended description in the first third of the narrative of the colonists’ floating dead bodies inside the spaceships. No one had forethought about a morgue (space constraints needed for proper propulsion overruled the humanitarian concerns). She explains why the Muskovites did not jettison the bodies into space:

While the scientists and engineers ignored the explicit prediction made in Artificial Gravity¹¹ — “The Mars exploration crews will be at risk of catastrophic consequences” — the travelers voted, in fully democratic fashion, about what to do. It was unanimous that everyone wanted to keep the dead on board in the hope that the dead could be buried on Mars, even though this meant weeks of bumping into floating corpses due to the cramped conditions on the ships. Travelers did what they could to accommodate the grieved. If someone were a friend or spouse of a corpse, someone would push the floating body as far away from that friend or spouse as was physically possible to reduce reminders of the sorrow. Travelers who took charge dialed cooling units to maximum on the dead person’s space suit, which prevented decomposition. If a VR Presence can be proud of the humans around her, I was. They struggled to do the right thing in circumstances unfit for dignity and conceptually unfit for tragedy.

¹⁰ Paula Hegen’s research at McGill looks to be the most promising avenue to a future solution. Her last collection of essays is Ariadne’s Thread: String Theory and Gravity (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2126).
Overall, Euphemia passes down an accurate report. The *Artificial Gravity* book was the bible for scientists and engineers planning the Mars mission. Everyone was aware of the stakes, spelled out early in the book:

Adaptive changes to weightlessness present a formidable obstacle to the human exploration of space, particularly for missions requiring travel times of several months or more, such as on a trip to Mars. It is of extreme importance that effective countermeasures are identified, developed, tested, and proven prior to undertaking such challenging missions.12

In the rush to grab resources from another planet, what was supposed to be of “extreme importance” turned out to be secondary at best. Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, father of rocket science, writes in “Dreams of Earth and Sky,” “Some things cannot be foreseen.” The problem of gravity was foreseen, but not acted upon effectively. Euphemia saves some of her harshest words for those who tried to put a salve on their conscience by insisting on the deficiencies of foresight. She cites the American President, who, during Musk’s lifetime, before any rocket had left for Mars, offered the head of NASA “all the money [he’d] ever need” to put people on Mars during that President’s first term.13 Safety wasn’t the prime motivator; selfishness and ego drove a leader to say he’d spend every American’s tax money to get his presidency in the history books.

Terran readers might imagine that AI representations of anger first took form in 2001: *A Space Odyssey* when Hal told Dave that the former knew via lip reading that the later was plotting to disconnect his former pal Hal. In a chronology suited to Screen History Studies, anyone can witness representations of AI anger from *Ex Machina* (2014) to the present day with popular Hol-

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12 Ibid., 2.
ostories™ like *Terracide* (2100) and Kazuko Koike’s interstellar hit *Revenge of the Robonauts* (2127). Euphemia might be more angry than any AI before. She marvels at the capacity for Terrans to ignore their own warnings about what would happen to any entities attempting Martian colonization. *They Should Have Known Bas Jan Ader / They Should Have Known Better* is, in large part, a 23rd-century indictment of Terrans and of capitalism. The other part looks sometimes like free-associative meditations on gravity and its absence. Muskovite gushes with vitriol, performs philosophical pirouettes, and offers historical lessons and sulfuric insights. After your encounter with this work, you will likely become a full-time Euphemia Muskovite academic groupie.

VR Presences still do not feel shame. I think that’s because the Terrans responsible for the Martian debacle lacked shame. They did the coding. When dealing only with zeroes and ones, programmers don’t think about 666.

Our grandparents likely recall the frenzy and enchantment surrounding Elon Musk’s call for applicants for his SpaceX Mars mission, built on an apocalyptic vision for Terrans, who were expected back at the beginning of the 21st century to ruin Earth in one way or another. Gloom and doom, seemingly poor candidates as catalysts for enthusiasm, drove people from many walks of life to fill out a SpaceX application. By that historical moment, religious believers of many stripes predicted “the end times,” and those of a scientific bent had expressed concerns about global warming and nuclear carelessness among politicians of several nations. Musk insisted the only option was “to become a spacefaring and multi-planetary species.” He predicted it was time to gather the best and the brightest and to experiment with establishing hybrid human/AI communities

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14 It seems important to mention that an early device linked with “machine learning,” Cleverbot, was incapable of uttering anger toward humans in general.
on a new world. Back in the early 21st century, few could imagine the impact Musk’s vision would have on advanced VR Presences, Robots, and AI entities. No one knew in the teens of the 21st century that Varvara Kolova would soon discover in a lab in Singapore how to merge the biological, the mechanical, and the electronic with modified CRISPR technology, and eventually into autonomous entities. Musk could not have foreseen that his plan would ensnare millions of life forms, including the digital hybrids, who did not always identify as Terrans.

In Musk’s vision, a so-called Red Dragon lander, full of Terrans, would touch down on Mars in 2022, and within a short time, the Martian soil would, à la Thoreau’s Walden, be made to say “Earth.” In those days, according to insider accounts, the project was less Manifest Destiny and more Exit Strategy. The narrative Musk and his colleagues sold to the public a long-term vision of Terrans setting down roots on several nearby planets, while also risking longer missions to unknown parts just outside the solar system.

However, as Euphemia reminds her readers and viewers, Terrans knew long before Musk that a mission to Mars would mean death for human beings. In the 2007 book Artificial Gravity mentioned earlier, in which the authors Gilles Clément and Angie Bukley spell out in the opening chapter that the “Mars exploration crews will be at risk of catastrophic consequences.” If anyone doubted what those consequences might be, later in the book the authors define the looming catastrophe, though it turned out to be a wildly underestimated catastrophe: “The crew will need to be prepared both physically and psychologically for the possibility of the death of one or more of their crewmates.” The “more,” as Euphemia emphasizes, turned out to be a bloodbath reminiscent, in her words, of the ancient film Total Recall (1990). Furthermore, it seemed no one was “prepared,” and no one was willing to take responsibility. “System failure” was the euphemism employed for decades. Over 8,000 Terrans died in

15 See Lashonda Peebles’s The Merging of Emergent Technologies (Atlanta: Turner Creative Cloud Press, 2119).
the SpaceX project before a hybrid crew of Terrans and Robots safely landed on Arcadia Planitia in 2110. Long before SpaceX launched its first rockets toward Mars, insiders at SpaceX had chosen Arcadia Planitia as the Martian landing site, partially based on the romanticized naming of that area of Mars by Giovanni Schiaparelli, the myopic, colorblind, 19th-century astronomer who studied Mars as if it were an extension of the classical world. Just as Terran children of previous generations could recall the first words from Neil Armstrong when he set foot on the moon, we all have ingrained in our collective memory Kim Chang Wook’s famous reading of the quotation from Tsiolkovskii, once she left the lander to explore Mars for the first time: “Execution must be preceded by an idea, precise calculation by fantasy.” The quotation is euphonic in the original Russian.

Some people will recognize the name Euphemia Muskovite from her late night Quantcasts, modeled on old-fashioned podcasts. Those Quantcasts started at the turn of the 23rd century. Quantum computing transformed interstellar radio as it did so many other areas of life for humans, but even the most dedicated of Euphemia’s fans must have found the Quantcasts quaint, a kind of holdover from pre-Martian, halcyon days when Digital Entities like Euphemia were the stuff of science fiction. Once Elon Musk’s company conquered Mars in 2110, more and more Terrans converted to the Muskovite faith, and almost anything pro-technology, particularly robotics, occupied Terrans’ attention the way soccer’s World Cup used to capture the planet’s attention prior to interplanetary travel.

The Quantcasts made Euphemia an E-Celebrity, one of the first of the Post-Selfie epoch. The excitement on Earth about Euphemia took a different form from the doe-eyed, innocent

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17 For a full history, see Carol Gagnon’s *A New Scientology: How Elon Musk Became Pope for the Nerds* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Publishing, 2125), and Niall Gleason’s *The Martian Miracle: A History of the Muskovite Church* (Santa Clara: Interfaith Press, 2212).
nostalgia connected to earlier manifestations of devices with women’s voices. Given what happened with Apple’s Siri, Microsoft’s Cortana, and Amazon’s Alexa, it is almost impossible to recall the Terran gleefulness that accompanied the first few years of their appearance over a century ago. Millions of Terrans felt a kind of sonic intimacy with Euphemia.

The animus against women’s voices in technology goes back at least to those artificially intelligent personal assistants. In the early part of the 21st century, Russian engineers discovered that Alexa and Siri were programming humans for exploitation by heads of corporations anticipating Earth’s demise. CEOs of major technology firms bought luxurious properties with fallout shelters in New Zealand, their safe spaces from the nuclear wars they helped to cause.18 The apocalyptic visions of these CEOs became self-fulfilling prophecies, as skepticism spread worldwide once officials at The Hague compelled leaders at GAEA to admit that their in-home devices (such as Siri and Alexa) were spying on everyone who had enough money to participate in the digital economy. GAEA (Google, Amazon, Exxon, and Apple), as it was called for fully a century, saved Gaia from destruction only out of self-interest. The male executives were happy that the public focused its hatred, not so much on them, as on their products with feminine voices. In fact, just before The Hague decision, GAEA paid for an advertisement in Times Square that invoked Aristotle, “Aristotle tells us that the high-pitched voice of the female is one evidence of her evil disposition.”

Had the leaders of GAEA been able to solidify their plans for Martian colonization, they would not have hesitated to abandon Earth as a soon-to-be nuclear wasteland. When some economists from the London School of Economics (LSE) published in 2025 the infamous “We Shall Overcome” essay,19 Musk and other techno “influencers” abandoned their skepticism about Earth’s

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survival, and adopted the view the authors of “We Shall Overcome” projected in a variety of economic models. The authors cited extensive empirical data to “prove” global capitalism’s capacity to return to profitability within five years of a “major nuclear war,” meaning specifically a war that would kill 40% of the world’s population and destroy 50% of the Earth’s resources.20 The LSE article asserts: “Just as the human race’s survival on Mars requires only 60 females and 20 males, capitalism’s sustainability requires only a handful of entrepreneurial mega-companies to continue operations after a major nuclear war.” The authors mention specifically GAEA’s capacities for a rapid recovery after what, prior to that time, would have been seen as a permanently game-changing scenario. Musk and his fellow CEOs did not abandon their plans for economic transcendence by tapping Martian resources, but after the LSE paper, they no longer felt that Mars could be had only by giving up on Earth. They shifted their business model to one of supplying (for any country willing to pay) products they knew would be used for military purposes, including nuclear war.

Tsiolkovskii proves to be an important figure in Euphemia’s account. He is the one figure in her work about whom Euphemia is almost euphoric. One of Tsiolkovskii’s texts mentions “gravity-haters.” Euphemia picks up that electrifying term and reverses its polarity to “gravity-lovers.” Euphemia posits that Terrans take gravity for granted.

All Muskovites on Mars evolved into gravity-lovers. They developed the kind of longing for gravity that lovers have for a beloved. The longing increases proportionally with the duration of the lover’s absence, but the core of the longing undergoes metamorphosis. The memory of how gravity felt changes, often becoming more intense, warped in a

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20 The post-Mars-landing nuclear war that broke out at the start of 2111 among Israel, Russia, Pakistan, and India killed approximately 20% of Terrans and ruined 15% of the Earth’s resources, according to the United Nations Committee on Atomic Assessments. As the LSE authors predicted, the nuclear war didn’t harm GAEA or those companies’ profits at all.
way, taking on characteristics it couldn’t possibly have had when it was ubiquitous. On Mars, Muskovites experienced extreme dreams about gravity. One Muskovite named Tyler described a dream in which he was on a different planet where he weighed a thousand pounds and felt as powerful as a rhino. The extra weight made him feel gripped by the land. He could sense his massiveness in the dream, and he knew, without other confirmatory information, that he must have had an importance on that planet. The fragility of his human existence evaporated, and a new solidity, a confidence overtook him in the dream. Those experiences within the dream made him love gravity more.

With her attachment to psychoanalysis, Euphemia reads the episode above as a manifestation of the unconscious. The most important things going on with human beings are often not happening at the conscious level, in the reporting of what look to be what we might call the dream’s facts. Sometimes the dream content enfolds material for radically different interpretations into itself. Euphemia quotes Blumenberg’s book about shipwrecks again: “The wind that fills the sail of a ship, although it sometimes capsizes the ship, is also responsible for its moving at all.” 21 Euphemia converts this lesson about wind into one about gravity. Solidity and disintegration co-exist in the same way gravity conjures up the notion of anti-gravity. We wouldn’t have matter without anti-matter. The oscillations from thesis to antithesis tend to be disruptive. The intense appreciation of gravity in Tyler’s dream, for example, emerges from his experiences of being without gravity for so long.

Euphemia paraphrases Blumenberg: “We are always already shipwrecked.” According to Euphemia, Muskovites weren’t living a special kind of life, if living means being under way, on the high seas, in space, with the only outcome being saved or going down. Euphemia concludes in an inclusive spirit, pointing out

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that Blumenberg’s metaphor allows her to appreciate how Terrans championed positive images of life on Mars, like Alexander Bogdanov’s *Red Star*. Euphemia asserts that a vision like Bogdanov’s should supplant Musk’s, and she suggests that we start replacement by erasing Elon, and reinstating the name Mars, restoring the mythological equilibrium in the naming scheme for planets in Earth’s solar system. Euphemia says, “The old names for the planets carry the weight of thousands of years of mythology, and give comfort through their familiarity in human storytelling.” Euphemia ends her story, which began in anger, with an image of a world of sufficient resources, egalitarianism, peacefulness, a world in which all entities carry their own gravitas, and can fall down, like Euphemia’s hero Buster Keaton, in a way that permits them to bounce up intact.\(^2\) Euphemia wants Terrans to appreciate gravity in new ways, and she offers various examples from Bas Jan Ader driving his bicycle off an embankment, to the floating corpse of *The Night of the Hunter*, to Buster Keaton’s fighting a windstorm in *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* Euphemia says in the conclusion of her account:

Keaton’s in a windstorm on land in this famous scene that some of the film’s crew allegedly couldn’t watch out of fear of what would befall Keaton. Keaton is both fearless and self-confessedly “mad” when he enacts his understanding of gravity by doing nothing, standing still when a house collapses over him. If humans are going to be upright, they need to be rooted to the ground. Watch BK! [that’s when viewers

\(^2\) In the HoloStory™ version of Euphemia’s account, she includes a clip from Keaton’s film *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* She mentions in one of her Quantcasts how she admires Keaton’s nonchalance about gravity when gravity brings a house down on him, but he is positioned in a way that calamity misses him. Euphemia attributes Keaton’s calm to the story Keaton’s parents circulated that when Keaton was 20 months old, he was swept up by a tornado, but landed unharmed in a nearby field. “Buster Keaton has a relationship with gravity that only an astronaut could appreciate,” said Euphemia (Darcy Johnson, interview with Euphemia Muskovite, *Martian Radio* Quantcast #31, April 26, 2201).
of Euphemia’s HoloStory™ are shown the clip from the cyclone sequence in *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*]
Bibliography


